



ENGLISH AND AMERICAN LITERATURE

PART NINE

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ENGLISH AND
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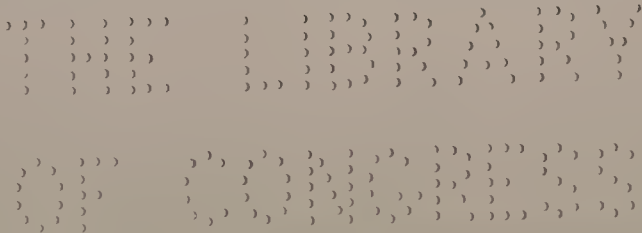
A CORRESPONDENCE
COURSE IN LITERARY
CRITICISM, INTER-
PRETATION AND
HISTORY

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INCLUDING NUMEROUS
MASTERPIECES

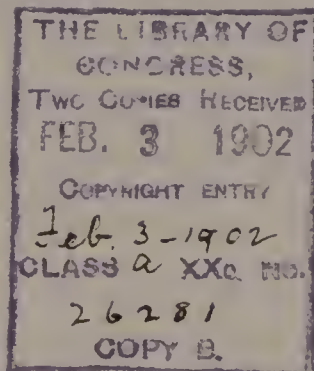
IN EIGHTEEN PARTS
PART NINE, LYRIC POETRY

CHICAGO
INTERSTATE SCHOOL OF
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Part Nine

Lyric Poetry

(Continued)

Elegies

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Elegiacal Poems

Elegies

A mournful song, in stately measure, praising the dead for his virtues, full of the grief that remains with the living, believing in the happiness of the departed and hoping for a blessed reunion in the hereafter, this is the typical elegy. On the one side it shades off into the ode, some poems being susceptible of classification in both groups; on the other it may take the form of sonnets, many of which answer every requirement of the dirge. Many poems are therefore elegiacal that are not strictly elegies. A rigid classification is never necessary but an association of these beautiful pieces, all thoroughly impregnated with the personal grief of the author, gives to each a greater power, a more thrilling significance. They arise from the deepest emotion and so are the offspring of divinest inspiration; love is in the heart of the writer and so the flight of song is best sustained; they are intended to show to the world respect and admiration for the one whose virtues they celebrate and so they are refined and polished to the last degree. Where grief, love and a hope to give earthly immortality to the object of his affection move the poet, we expect the finest efforts of his genius and we are not disappointed.

Elegies

This Part contains some of the grandest, the most perfect productions of poetic skill.

When man sees his loved one laid away forever, he naturally longs to preserve the memory of the departed to succeeding generations, to erect some permanent memorial. Funereal monuments are characteristic of every race and have proved the most enduring records of the past. The inscriptions upon these tombs are early records of the elegiac spirit.

The epitaph is elegy in miniature. "To define an epitaph is useless; everyone knows it is an inscription on a tomb. An *epitaph* is indeed commonly panegyrical, because we are seldom distinguished by a stone but by our friends," says Dr. Johnson.

This epitaph was written by Robert Wilde in the seventeenth century:

Here lies a piece of Christ; a star in dust;
A vein of gold; a china dish that must
Be used in heaven, when God shall feast the
just.

The two epitaphs from Ben Jonson given next are well known and often alluded to.

On Elizabeth L. H.

Wouldst thou hear what man can say
In a little? Reader, stay.

Underneath this stone doth lie
As much beauty as could die:
Which in life did harbour give
To more virtue than doth live.
If at all she had a fault,
Leave it buried in this vault.
One name was Elizabeth,
The other, let it sleep with death:
Fitter, when it died, to tell,
Than that it lived at all. Farewell!

Epitaph on the Countess of Pembroke

Underneath this sable hearse
Lies the subject of all verse,
SIDNEY'S sister, PEMBROKE'S mother;
Death! ere thou hast slain another,
Learned and fair, and good as she,
Time shall throw a dart at thee.

Elegies

The number of elegiacal poems is very large and the student will be able to add many to the few here given. This *Soldiers' Dirge* by William Collins (1721-1756) is in dainty verse and notable for the poetic imagery and the suggestive pictures.

Soldiers' Dirge

How sleep the brave, who sink to rest
By all their country's wishes blest !
When spring, with dewy fingers cold,
Returns to deck their hallow'd mold,
She there shall dress a sweeter sod
Than fancy's feet have ever trod.

By fairy hands their knell is rung,
By forms unseen their dirge is sung:
There Honor comes, a pilgrim gray,
To bless the turf that wraps their clay;
And Freedom shall awhile repair,
To dwell a weeping hermit there.

Bereavement

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

She dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove;
A maid whom there were none to praise,
And very few to love.

A violet by a mossy stone
Half-hidden from the eye !
— Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and O !
The difference to me !

Mary

CHARLES WOLFE

If I had thought thou could'st have died,
I might not weep for thee;
But I forgot, when by thy side,
That thou could'st mortal be.
It never through my mind had passed
That time would e'er be o'er,

Elegies

And I on thee should look my last,
And thou should'st smile no more !

And still upon that face I look,
And think 'twill smile again;
And still the thought I will not brook
That I must look in vain.

But when I speak thou dost not say,
What thou ne'er left'st unsaid;
And now I feel, as well I may,
Sweet Mary, thou art dead !

If thou would'st stay, e'en as thou art,
All cold, and all serene —
I still might press thy silent heart,
And where thy smiles have been !
While e'en thy chill, bleak corse I have,
Thou seemest still mine own;
But there — I lay thee in thy grave,
And I am now alone !

I do not think, where'er thou art,
Thou hast forgotten me;
And I, perhaps, may soothe this heart,
In thinking still of thee:
Yet there was round thee such a dawn
Of light ne'er seen before,
As fancy never could have drawn,
And never can restore !

Elegy in a Country Churchyard

THOMAS GRAY

Thomas Gray

1716-1771

One hundred years after the death of Shakespeare there was born a poet whose fame is almost as firmly established as that of the great dramatist. His reputation, moreover, rests almost wholly upon a single poem, the *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, a few verses containing more noble thoughts expressed in more perfect rhythm than are found in many a longer poem. The pains taken in composing this touching elegy which it took him eight years to finish were characteristic of the author. He was a small, handsome man, of somewhat effeminate appearance, carefully dressed and fastidious to a degree. He was born in 1716, received his education at Cambridge and traveled on the continent with the son of Sir Horace Walpole. He spent most of his life at Cambridge and devoted his time to study. Next to Milton he is said to have been the most learned of all the great writers. His poems are few in number but each one was written and polished with extreme care. His *Ode to Spring*, *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College*, and *A Hymn to Adversity*, are his only well-known poems. He declined the honor of poet laureate

Thomas Gray

of Great Britain, but afterward accepted the chair of modern history at Cambridge. He died in 1771.

Hardly any other poem in the English language is so well known as is Gray's remarkable *Elegy*. It is a creation that speaks directly to the heart universal, that deals with the emotions common to every human being and depicts those emotions in words every person can understand, to the music of a verse as thoroughly in harmony with the subject as is the atmosphere of the poem.

On a calm summer's evening he seats himself in the yard of the quaint little church of Stoke Pogis. Around him is the beautiful landscape of an English park; great shade trees offer shelter in pastures where cattle graze unmolested. Windsor and Eton are far away and the pensive poet is alone with nature and the dead. At once he begins to create for us the atmosphere of the place, the beauty and the peace that lend enchantment to the hour and lull our spirits into the mood for the quiet contemplation he desires. The curfew rings, the herd winds by, the ploughman nods goodbye and darkness falls around us. As we read the lines we feel the darkness coming on, no matter where we are. The glimmering landscape disappears, our cares fly away and we hear the sleepy droning of the beetle and the tinkle of bells in the distant folds. Over there in the square tower the owl, so rarely molested in this quiet spot, wonders at our intrusion and complains to the moon

Thomas Gray

of our disturbing presence. With what art has all this been done ! In eight short lines Gray has prepared the way so that his quiet meditations shall be received by us and held for thought. We yield ourselves to their influence. The only way one can read and get for himself the best a poem has is to yield himself to the sensuous music of the lines and let his imagination run riot with the details of a scene suggested merely. In what direction will the poet's thoughts tend ? In the little church are some rather stately monuments, at least some that indicate position, wealth, and possible refinement. Will these touch his imagination, will these form the subject of his reflection ? No, his thoughts are with the people, the substratum upon which society is built, the poor whom we have always with us. It is not within the English church, filled with local pride, where relatives vie with each other in elaborate memorials which have their changing styles as the years move on, but it is outside underneath the ever-present trees, among the moldering heaps, that may everywhere roughen the surface of the universal tomb of man that Gray finds his inspiration. And as for so many of us the turf somewhere heaves, as for most of us some dear one lies forever at rest in his narrow cell, we turn willingly from the pomp of mural tablet or sculptured bust to linger with the rude forefathers of the hamlet.

Thomas Gray

With appropriate atmosphere around us and our sympathies enlisted for the people of whom he writes, the poet gives us glimpses of their life; the customary sounds of a rural morning, the evening pleasures, the daytime labors; none of these shall move them more.

Acquainted now with the class of people whose virtues the poet is to sing, we are in the mood for his protest against the ambition which would view with contempt their simple life, or the wealth so proud of its own display as to look with scorn on the poor and humble.

The next stanza is one of those general statements, those gems of thought which so often sparkle as a bright stone in appropriate setting. The titled noble, the powerful of earth, the most beautiful person, the wealthiest, all must die. Such the thought: "All that live will share thy fate." It is a thought we all have had repeatedly, but whoever clothed it in such fitting words?

Returning to the special subject of his contemplation, he deprecates in the proud any feeling that blame should rest upon these poor for having no memorial in the aisles of some great cathedral, for no urn inscribed with the story of the dead, no bust so beautiful as to seem endowed with life, no honor however great, no flattery however sincere can call life back, can "soothe the dull, cold ear of Death." And moreover in this neglected

Thomas Gray

graveyard are perhaps some who might have written inspired poetry, or ruled kingdoms, if they could have been educated and had not been repressed by the stupefying influence of poverty.

Then we are given another stanza of application as wide as the world, a generalization as beautiful as the language can make it. Placed naturally in the poem the stanza is complete and perfect in itself, another gracefully figurative expression of a well-known truth. This makes it the frequently quoted stanza it is. But there is no break in the unity of thought for the very next stanza calls to our minds the fact that some villager now lying before us may have withstood the oppression of some titled landlord with the same fearlessness that John Hampden withstood the tyrannical measures of Charles I of England, or that here may be a soul as keenly attuned to the music of poetry as was Milton's, some person as roughly and sturdily powerful as the famous Cromwell who overthrew Charles I and established the Protectorate.

Their lot forbade all these things, forbade them to gain honor in the senate, to despise threats of pain and ruin, to make the land prosperous, to find fame in the national house. But though their lot was hard in this respect and gave them little opportunity for the exercise of their virtues it confined their vices and forbade the hideous slaughter of him who seeks to conquer a kingdom;

Thomas Gray

it forbade them to hide the truth they knew, to control the blush which marked their frank shame and to sell their talents to the wealthy and the proud, as many a famous poet has done. Their real condition and character are indicated in the apt phrases of the next stanza: *The madding crowd's ignoble strife, their sober wishes, the cool sequestered vale, the noiseless tenor of their way.*

After three stanzas descriptive of the pathetic memorial of unlettered grief, Gray gives another truth known to man wherever he breathes—the hesitation to face death, the longing for companionship even through the valley of the shadow.

Now addressing us directly or at least calling upon some kindred spirit, he looks forward to his own death and burial. Should we ask for the thoughtful man, the meditative genius who wrote the artful, artless tale, some old patriarch of the region may tell us how he had seen the poet wandering solitary and alone in the early morning or resting wearily at noontide, or conning over his melancholy lines, hopeless and forlorn; how he had missed him one day and another and then how with solemn dirges he had seen him borne to the quiet spot where now in fact the poet Gray reposes.

The epitaph the poet writes for himself follows; we may instinctively feel the sensitive soul, deprecating criticism, anxious to please but with-

Thomas Gray

out confidence in himself. He lacked sympathy from his contemporaries and his lofty character suffered from lack of genial atmosphere and friendly appreciation.

“Had Gray written nothing but his *Elegy*, high as he stands, I am not sure that he would not stand higher; it is the corner-stone of his glory. . . . Gray’s *Elegy* pleased instantly and eternally.”

—*Lord Byron.*

“Gray’s *Elegy* owes much of its popularity to its strain of verse; the strain of thought alone, natural and touching as it is, would never have impressed it upon the hearts of thousands and tens of thousands unless the diction and meter in which it was embodied had been perfectly in unison with it. Beattie ascribed its general reception to both causes. Neither cause would have sufficed for producing so general and extensive and permanent an effect unless the poem had been, in the full import of the word, harmonious.”

—*Southey.*

“The *Churchyard* abounds with images which find a mirror in every mind and with sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo. The four stanzas beginning ‘Yet even these bones’ are to me original: I have never seen the notions in any other place; yet he that reads them here persuades himself that he has always felt them. Had Gray written often thus it would have been vain to blame and useless to praise him.”

—*Johnson.*

Elegy

Written in a Country Churchyard

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea,
The plowman homeward plods his weary way
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the
sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning
flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower
The moping owl does to the moon com-
plain
Of such as, wandering near her secret bower,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's
shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mold-
'ring heap,
Each in his narrow cell forever laid,
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

Gray's Elegy

The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,
The swallow twittering from the straw-
built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly
bed.

For them no more the blazing hearth shall
burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care;
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has
broke;
How jocund did they drive their team a-field!
How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy
stroke!

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear, with a disdainful smile,
The short and simple annals of the poor.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er
gave,

Gray's Elegy

Await alike the inevitable hour: —

The paths of glory lead but to the grave.¹

Nor you, ye proud, impute to these the fault,
If Memory o'er their tomb no trophies raise,
Where, through the long-drawn aisle and
fretted vault,

The pealing anthem swells the note of
praise.

Can storied urn or animated bust

Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honor's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of
Death?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid

Some heart once pregnant with celestial
fire;

1. The following from Parkman's *Montcalm and Wolfe* gives an interesting anecdote of General Wolfe on his night expedition to storm the Heights of Abraham:

"For full two hours the procession of boats, borne on the current, steered silently down the St. Lawrence. The stars were visible, but the night was moonless and sufficiently dark. The general was in one of the foremost boats, and near him was a young midshipman, John Robison, afterward professor of natural history in the University of Edinburgh. He used to tell in his later life how Wolfe, with a low voice, repeated *Gray's Elegy in a Country Churchyard* to the officers with him. Probably it was to relieve the intense strain of his thoughts. Among the rest was the verse which his own fate was soon to illustrate.

"*The paths of glory lead but to the grave.* 'Gentlemen,' he said, as his recital ended, 'I would rather have written those lines than take Quebec.' None were there, to tell him that the hero is greater than the poet."

Gray's Elegy

Hands that the rod of empire might have
 swayed,
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre.

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page,
 Rich with the spoils of time, did ne'er
 unroll:
Chill Penury repressed their noble rage,
 And froze the genial current of the soul.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
 The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
 And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village Hampden, that with dauntless
 breast
 The little tyrant of his fields withstood,
Some mute inglorious Milton, here may rest —
 Some Cromwell, guiltless of his country's
 blood.

Th' applause of listening senates to command,
 The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
 And read their history in a nation's eyes,

Gray's Elegy

Their lot forbade: nor circumscribed alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined;

Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind;

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to
hide,

To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,
Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learned to stray;
Along the cool sequestered vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

Yet e'en these bones from insult to protect,
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture
decked,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.

Their name, their years, spelt by the unlettered Muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply;
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.

Gray's Elegy

For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing, anxious being e'er resigned,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing, ling'ring look behind?

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
E'en from the tomb the voice of nature cries;
E'en in our ashes live their wonted fires.

For thee, who, mindful of th' unhonored dead,
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate,
If chance, by lonely Contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate,

Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,
"Oft have we seen him at the peep of
dawn,
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away,
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn.

"There at the foot of yonder nodding beech,
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so
high,
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

"Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,
Mutt'ring his wayward fancies, he would
rove;



Gray's Elegy

Now drooping, woful-wan, like one forlorn,
Or crazed with care, or crossed in hopeless love.

“One morn I missed him from the customed hill,
Along the heath, and near his fav’rite tree.
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he.

“The next, with dirges due, in sad array,
Slow through the churchway path we saw him borne,—
Approach and read, for thou canst read, the lay
Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn.

“There scattered oft, the earliest of the year,
By hands unseen are showers of violets found;
The red-breast loves to build and warble there,
And little footsteps lightly print the ground.”

THE EPITAPH.

Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth,
A youth, to Fortune and to Fame unknown:

Gray's Elegy

Fair Science frowned not on his humble birth,
And Melancholy marked him for her own.

Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere;
Heaven did a recompense as largely send:
He gave to Misery (all he had) a tear,
He gained from Heaven ('twas all he wished)
a friend.

No further seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
(There they alike in trembling hope repose,)
The bosom of his Father and his God.

NOTE.—The stanza preceding the Epitaph was omitted from the final revision of the poem.

Threnodia



JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL



Threnodia

Gone, gone from us ! and shall we see
Those sibyl-leaves of destiny,
Those calm eyes, nevermore ?
Those deep, dark eyes so warm and bright,
Wherein the fortunes of the man
Lay slumbering in prophetic light,
In characters a child might scan ?
So bright, and gone forth utterly ?
O stern word — Nevermore !

The stars of those two gentle eyes
Will shine no more on earth;
Quenched are the hopes that had their birth,
As we watched them slowly rise,
Stars of a mother's fate;
And she would read them o'er and o'er,
Pondering, as she sate,
Over their dear astrology,
Which she had conned and conned before,
Deeming she needs must read aright
What was writ so passing bright.
And yet, alas ! she knew not why,
Her voice would falter in its song,
And tears would slide from out her eye,

Tbrenodia

Silent, as they were doing wrong.
Her heart was like a wind-flower, bent
Even to breaking with the balmy dew,
Turning its heavenly nourishment
(That filled with tears its eyes of blue,
Like a sweet suppliant that weeps in prayer,
Making her innocence show more fair,
Albeit unwitting of the ornament,)
Into a load too great for it to bear:
O stern word — Nevermore !

The tongue, that scarce had learned to claim
An entrance to a mother's heart
By that dear talisman, a mother's name,
Sleeps all forgetful of its art !
I loved to see the infant soul
(How mighty in the weakness
Of its untutored meekness !)
Peep timidly from out its nest,
His lips, the while,
Fluttering with half-fledged words,
Or hushing to a smile
That more than words expressed,
When his glad mother on him stole
And snatched him to her breast !
O, thoughts were brooding in those eyes,
That would have soared like strong-winged
birds

Tbrenodía

Far, far into the skies,
Gladding the earth with song
And gushing harmonies,
Had he but tarried with us long !
O stern word — Nevermore !

How peacefully they rest,
Crossfolded there
Upon his little breast,
Those small, white hands that ne'er were
still before,
But ever sported with his mother's hair,
Or the plain cross that on her breast she
wore !

Her heart no more will beat
To feel the touch of that soft palm,
That ever seemed a new surprise
Sending glad thoughts up to her eyes
To bless him with their holy calm,—
Sweet thoughts ! they made her eyes as sweet.
How quiet are the hands
That wove those pleasant bands !
But that they do not rise and sink
With his calm breathing, I should think
That he were dropped asleep.
Alas ! too deep, too deep
Is this his slumber !
Time scarce can number

Tbrenodia

The years ere he shall wake again —
O, may we see his eyelids open then !
O stern word — Nevermore !

As the airy gossamere,
Floating in the sunlight clear,
Where'er it toucheth clingeth tightly
Round glossy leaf or stump unsightly,
So from his spirit wandered out
Tendrils spreading all about,
Knitting all things to its thrall
With a perfect love of all:
O stern word — Nevermore !

He did but float a little way
Adown the stream of time,
With dreamy eyes watching the ripples play,
Or hearkening to their fairy chime;
His slender sail
Ne'er felt the gale;
He did but float a little way,
And, putting to the shore
While yet 'twas early day,
Went calmly on his way,
To dwell with us no more !
No jarring did he feel,
No grating on his shallop's keel;
A strip of silver sand

Tbrenodía

Mingled the waters with the land
Where he was seen no more:
O stern word — Nevermore !

Full short his journey was; no dust
Of earth unto his sandals clave;
The weary weight that old men must,
He bore not to the grave.
He seemed a cherub who had lost his way
And wandered hither, so his stay
With us was short, and 'twas most meet
That he should be no delver in Earth's clod,
Nor need to pause and cleanse his feet
To stand before his God;
O blest word — Evermore !

Studies

A running commentary accompanied Gray's *Elegy*. In the study of this poem, you are left to make your own interpretation but the following questions will assist you. Read the poem and then, question by question, go through these studies. Do not neglect any. Find some satisfactory answer to every one. Some are questions of fact. To these, accurate answers are necessary. Others are matters of opinion. Your opinions must satisfy yourself and should of course be formed from reason. Satisfy *yourself* that you have a reasonable answer to every question or that the question itself is unreasonable, before you leave the poem. Then as a final act read the poem from beginning to end aloud, to some person if possible.

How many feet in the longest line? In the shortest? How many different measures in the poem? What is the verse? Do the short lines occur at regular intervals? Are the stanzas uniform in length? Uniform in structure? Can you see any regularity in the general structure of the poem? Is there a refrain? Does it add to the beauty of the poem? What evidences can you find that the poet followed an established plan in his composition? What are the *sibyl leaves of*

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destiny? What is the figurative significance of the phrase? Is force given to the idea by the clause *which a child might scan?*

How are the gentle eyes *stars* of a *mother's fate*? What is meant by *their dear astrology*? Why should the mother's voice falter, why should tears slide from out her eye? Why should they be silent? In what way could they do wrong?

What is the *wind-flower*? In what respect was her heart like a wind-flower? What was the balmy dew that could bend her heart even to breaking? What was the heavenly nourishment that was turned into so great a load? What connection have the words in the parentheses with the remainder of the sentence? What is the antecedent of *that*, first word in parentheses? What makes the innocence of the suppliant appear more fair? What was the ornament? Is it a premonition of the child's death that makes the mother sad?

What is a talisman? What was the child's talisman? How old a child was it? How could a child be mighty in weakness? What is alluded to in the figure when he sees *the infant soul peep timidly from out its nest*?

Is the poet still thinking of the same comparison when he speaks of the fluttering of half-fledged words? Is it a fine comparison to liken the hesitating speech of a child to the fluttering of half-fledged birdlings? Thoughts were brooding

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in whose eyes? Is the same figure continued in these lines? What future is seen for the child in the lines *gladding the earth with song and gushing harmonies*? What relation does the poet bear to the child?

To what is the first stanza devoted? To what features of the child is the second given? The third? The fourth? What were the glad sweet thoughts the little, sporting hands sent up to the mother's eyes? What were the bands the small hand wove? What are they that do not rise and sink with his calm breathing; what is indicated by this? What is meant by his waking again? Does the last line of the stanza mean that the poet does not expect to see those eyelids open then?

What is the gossamere? Have you seen it, dew-covered some bright morning, clinging round a glossy leaf or unsightly stump? Is the figure beautiful that compares the babe's heart-tendrils to these airy gossameres? Is gossameres a pretty word? Have you seen it before, "restless gossameres"?

Is it an apt figure to liken the infant to a little boat floating down the stream of time? To whose fairy chime did he listen? Are these lines harmonious: "With dreamy eyes watching the ripples play, or listening to their fairy chime"? Can you improve upon them by changing the order or substituting different words? Is slender an appro-

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priate adjective to apply to his sail? What is meant by saying that his sail *never felt the gale*? How did he *put to the shore*? What is the significance of *while yet 'twas early day*? Did the child suffer as he died? Did he die peacefully? How do you know? What is the significance of the *strip of silver sand* that *mingled the waters with the land*? Why *silver* sand? Is the stanza musical? Read it aloud, gently. Is it not a charming figure for the brief life and sweet death of a lovely infant?

To what is his life compared in the last stanza? What is meant by saying that *no dust clave to his sandals*? Why sandals instead of shoes or slippers? Of what word is *weight* the subject? What is meant by *'twas most meet*? Is *delver in Earth's clod* to be taken literally? Why the somewhat forced use of the word *clod*? Why not *soil*? Is there an allusion to any custom in the phrase *pause and cleanse thy feet*? What has been the last line in every preceding stanza? Do you see any reason for the change?

Does the elegy have a unity of thought throughout? Does the feeling rise regularly to the end? Which stanza is the most beautiful? Which the most pathetic? Which shows most deeply the mother's grief? Which most pathetically the loss to everyone? Which most vividly the beauty of the babe? What is there in the poem for a person not interested in this particular child? Is

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the experience of the parents a common one? Is there anything exceptional in the facts of the poem? Would you from choice read the poem again? Can you imagine circumstances under which it might appeal more strongly to you?

In Memoriam

ALFRED TENNYSON



In Memoriam

Arthur Henry Hallam was the eldest son of the great historian. He was two years younger than Tennyson and gifted with a genius that promised to rival the great poet himself. The two were educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, and developed a warm and intimate friendship. The families were also intimate and Hallam was engaged to be married to Tennyson's sister. In 1833 when Hallam was twenty-two years of age, he went abroad for his health, his father accompanying him. At Vienna he caught a slight cold which brought on an attack of intermittent fever that did not appear to be alarming, but a sudden congestion of the brain set in and the young man died very suddenly. His body was brought back to England and buried at Clevedon church.

In Memoriam is a series of lyrics of uniform meter, all dealing with different phases of the poet's grief for his friend, and together making the noblest elegy in the language. The poems were written at different times and were gathered together and published in their present form in 1850.

This elegy was not at first received everywhere with approval, but it has gradually established itself as Tennyson's masterpiece and is now gener-

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ally recognized as of surpassing power. As a type of the unfavorable criticism with which the work was met, this is offered from Charlotte Brontë: "I have read Tennyson's *In Memoriam* or, rather, part of it; I closed the book when I had got about half way. It is beautiful, it is mournful, it is monotonous. Many of the feelings expressed bear in their utterance the stamp of truth; yet if Arthur Hallam had been somewhat nearer Tennyson—his brother instead of his friend—I should have distrusted this measured and printed movement of grief."

Another, in a different vein is from the pen of H. A. Taine: "His long poem *In Memoriam*, written in praise and memory of a friend who died young, is cold, monotonous, and too prettily arranged. He goes into mourning, but like a correct gentleman, with brand-new gloves, wipes away his tears with a cambric handkerchief, and displays throughout the religious service which ends the ceremony, all the compunction of a respectful and well-trained layman."

On the other hand here are opinions that do away with the superficial criticisms just quoted and demonstrate the strong qualities of the production, its lyric beauty, its idealization of love, its moral grandeur:

"His friend is nowhere in his sight, and God is silent. Death, God's final compulsion to prayer, in its dread, its gloom, its utter stillness, its ap-

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parent nothingness, urges the cry. Moanings over the dead are mingled with the profoundest questionings of philosophy, the signs of nature, and the story of Jesus, while now and then the star of the morning, bright Phosphor, flashes a few rays through the shifting, cloudy darkness. And if the sun has not arisen on the close of the book, yet the aurora of the coming dawn gives light enough to make the onward journey possible and hopeful.”

— *George MacDonald*.

“At the age of forty a man blessed with a sound mind in a sound body should reach the maturity of his intellectual power. At such a period Tennyson produced *In Memoriam*, his most characteristic and significant work. In it are concentrated his wisest reflections upon life, death, and immortality, the worlds within and without; while the whole song is so largely uttered, and so pervaded with the singer’s manner that any isolated line is recognized at once. This work stands by itself; none can essay another upon its model without yielding every claim to personality, and at the risk of inferiority that would be appalling.

“The strength of Tennyson’s intellect has full sweep in this elegiac poem — the great threnody of our language, by virtue of unique conception and power. *Lycidas*, with its primrose beauty and varied lofty flights is but the extension of a theme set by Moschus and Bion. Shelley, in

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Adonais, despite his spiritual ecstasy and splendor of lament, followed the same masters — yes, and took his landscape and imagery from distant climes. Swinburne's dirge for Baudelaire is a wonder of melody; nor do we forget the *Thyrsis* of Arnold, and other modern adventures in a direction where the sweet and absolute solemnity of the Saxon tongue is most apparent. Still, as an original and intellectual production, *In Memoriam* is beyond them all and a more important though possibly no more enduring creation of rhythmic art. The metrical form of this work deserves attention. The author's choice of transposed quatrain verse was a piece of good fortune. Its hymnal quality, finely exemplified in the opening prayer, is always impressive, and although a monotone, no more monotonous than the sounds of nature — the murmur of the ocean, the sighing of the mountain pines. Were *In Memoriam* written in direct quatrains, I think the effect would be unendurable. The work as a whole is built up of successive lyrics, each expressing a single phase of the poet's sorrow-brooding thought; and here again is followed the method of nature, which evolves cell after cell, and joining each to each constructs the sentient organization. But Tennyson's art instincts are always perfect; he does the fitting thing, and rarely seeks, through eccentric and curious movements, to attract the popular regard. As to scenery, imagery, and

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general treatment, *In Memoriam* is eminently a British poem. The grave, majestic, hymnal measure swells like the peal of an organ, yet acts as a brake on undue spasmodic outbursts of discordant grief.”
—*E. C. Stedman.*

“The greatest poem, all things considered, that Tennyson ever wrote is *In Memoriam*. Its name indicates one of the most difficult efforts which can be made in Literature. It aims at embalming a private sorrow for everlasting remembrance, at rendering a personal grief generally and immortally interesting. The set eye, the marble brow of stoicism would cast back human sympathy; the broken accents and convulsive weeping of individual affliction would awaken no nobler emotion than mere pity; it was sorrow in a calm and stately attitude, robed in angel-like beauty, though retaining a look of earnest, endless sadness that would draw generation after generation to the house of mourning. No poet save one possessed not only of commanding genius, but of peculiar qualifications for the task, could have attempted to delineate a sorrow like this. The genius of Tennyson found in the work its precise and most congenial employment; and the result is surely *the finest elegiac poem in the world.*”

—*Peter Bayne.*

“Everything reminds him of the dead. Every joy or sorrow of man, every aspect of nature, from —

In Memoriam

The forest cracked, the waters curl'd;
The cattle huddled on the lea,
The thousand waves of wheat
That ripple round the lonely grange.

In every place, where in old days they had met and conversed; in every dark wrestling of the spirit with the doubts and fears of manhood, throughout the whole outward universe of nature, and the whole inward universe of spirit, the soul of his dead friend broods, at first a memory shrouded in blank despair, then a living presence, a ministering spirit, answering doubts, calming fears, stirring up noble aspirations, utter humility, leading the poet upward step by step to faith and peace and hope. Not that there runs throughout the book a conscious or organic method. The poems seem often to be united merely by the identity of their meter, so exquisitely chosen, that while the major rhyme in the second and third lines of each stanza gives the solidity and self-restraint required by such deep themes, the mournful minor rhyme of each first and fourth line always leads the ear to expect something beyond, and enables the poet's thoughts to wander sadly on from stanza to stanza and poem to poem, in an endless chain of —

Linked sweetness long drawn out.

There are records of risings and fallings again, of alternate cloud and sunshine throughout the book

In Memoriam

— earnest and passionate records yet never bitter; humble, yet never abject; with a depth and vehemence of affection ‘passing the love of woman,’ yet without a taint of sentimentality; self-restrained and dignified, without even narrowing into artificial coldness — altogether rivalling the sonnets of Shakespeare. Why should we not say boldly surpassing — for the sake of the superior faith into which it rises, for the sake of the poem at the opening of the volume — in our eyes, the noblest Christian poem which several centuries have seen? ”

— *Charles Kingsley.*

In Memoriam is so long that it could not be published entire in this volume, but enough is printed to give a comprehensive idea and, it is hoped, to create a desire to read all the lyrics. The thread of continuity between the different sections is not materially injured by the omissions, for the parts are not intimately connected. Critics differ in the classification they make and the grouping of the lyrics often varies materially. But it is not difficult to trace the general trend of thought, however great the difference of interpretation in specific instances. The numbering of the lyrics has been preserved that the student may take note of the omissions. Running with the text is a series of comments giving in general terms a brief outline of the thought and an indication of the classification made in Davidson's *Prolegomena to In*

In Memoriam

Memoriam, published by D. C. Heath & Co. Davidson says that the fundamental thought of *In Memoriam* is, “Man’s true happiness consists in the perfect conformity of his will to the divine will, and this conformity is attained through love first of man and then of God.”

In Memoriam

ARTHUR HENRY HALLAM

OBIIT MDCCCXXXIII

Strong Son of God, immortal Love
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
Believing where we can not prove;

Thine are these orbs of light and shade;
Thou madest Life in man and brute;
Thou madest Death; and lo, thy foot
Is on the skull which thou hast made.

Thou wilt not leave us in the dust:
Thou madest man, he knows not why;
He thinks he was not made to die;
And thou hast made him: thou art just.

Thou seemest human and divine,
The highest, holiest manhood, thou:
Our wills are ours, we know not how;
Our wills are ours to make them thine.

In Memoriam

Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be:
They are but broken lights of thee,
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

We have but faith: we can not know:
For knowledge is of things we see;
And yet we trust it comes from thee,
A beam in darkness: let it grow.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell:
That mind and soul, according well,
May make one music as before,

But vaster. We are fools and slight;
We mock thee when we do not fear:
But help thy foolish ones to bear;
Help thy vain worlds to bear thy light.

Forgive what seemed my sin in me;
What seemed my worth since I began;
For merit lives from man to man,
And not from man, O Lord, to thee.

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Forgive my grief for one removed,
Thy creature, whom I found so fair.
I trust he lives in thee, and there
I find him worthier to be loved.

Forgive these wild and wandering cries,
Confusions of a wasted youth;
Forgive them where they fail in truth,
And in thy wisdom make me wise.

This invocation to Immortal Love, the Strong Son of God, which serves as an introduction and prologue, was not written until 1849, and so may be considered as a summing up, as the conclusion of the whole matter.

I.

I held it truth, with him who sings
To one clear harp in divers tones,
That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things.

But who shall so forecast the years
And find in loss a gain to match?
Or reach a hand thro' time to catch
The far-off interest of tears?

In Memoriam

Let Love clasp Grief lest both be drowned,
Let darkness keep her raven gloss :
Ah, sweeter to be drunk with loss,
To dance with death, to beat the ground,

Than that the victor Hours should scorn
The long result of love, and boast,
“Behold the man that loved and lost,
But all he was is overworn.”

Lyric II is an address to the yew tree, which is usually found in English graveyards and seems to Tennyson symbolic of his own overpowering grief; III is a direct address to Sorrow and raises the question whether he shall submit all to her; in IV Grief follows him even to the land of sleep and wakes his will to mourn no more; in V he fears the expression of his grief is sinful, but finally decides to wrap himself in words like mourner's weeds, that show but the bare outline of his great grief.

VI.

One writes, that “Other friends remain,”
That “Loss is common to the race,”—
And common is the commonplace,
And vacant chaff well meant for grain.
That loss is common would not make
My own less bitter, rather more :

In Memoriam

Too common ! Never morning wore
To evening, but some heart did break.

O father, wheresoe'er thou be,
Who pledgest now thy gallant son;
A shot, ere half thy draught be done,
Hath still'd the life that beat from thee.

O mother, praying God will save
Thy sailor, — while thy head is bowed,
His heavy-shotted hammock shroud,
Drops in his vast and wandering grave.

Ye know no more than I who wrought
At that last hour to please him well;
Who mused on all I had to tell,
And something written, something thought ;

Expecting still his advent home ;
And ever met him on his way
With wishes, thinking, here to-day,
Or here to-morrow will he come.

Oh, somewhere, meek unconscious dove,
That sittest ranging golden hair;
And glad to find thyself so fair,
Poor child, that waitest for thy love !

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For now her father's chimney glows
In expectation of a guest ;
And thinking, "This will please him best,"
She takes a ribbon or a rose ;

For he will see them on to-night ;
And with the thought her color burns ;
And having left the glass, she turns
Once more to set a ringlet right ;

And, even when she turned, the curse
Had fallen, and her future lord
Was drowned in passing thro' the ford,
Or killed in falling from his horse.

O what to her shall be the end?
And what to me remains of good?
To her, perpetual maidenhood,
And unto me no second friend.

In VII and VIII everything reminds him of his friend and he continues to indulge himself in his melancholy and decides, since his poetry had pleased Hallam, to plant this flower upon his grave. This may be considered a first section of the elegy though the division is arbitrary, none showing in the published collection.

The next section extending to and including the Twenty-first lyric is devoted to the death of his

In Memoriam

friend, his return by ship and his burial in England. Two numbers are an address to the fair ship that brings the body and which the poet hopes may bear the dear burden safely home to us who deem that, than being engulfed at sea it is sweeter far

“To rest beneath the clover sod,
That takes the sunshine and the rains,
Or where the kneeling hamlet drains
The chalice of the grapes of God.”

XI.

Calm is the morn without a sound,
Calm as to suit a calmer grief,
And only thro' the faded leaf
The chestnut pattering to the ground:

Calm and deep peace on this high wold,
And on these dews that drench the furze,
And all the silvery gossamers
That twinkle into green and gold:

Calm and still light on yon great plain
That sweeps with all its autumn bowers,
And crowded farms and lessening towers,
To mingle with the bounding main:

Calm and deep peace in this wide air,
These leaves that redden to the fall;

In Memoriam

And in my heart, if calm at all,
If any calm, a calm despair:

Calm on the seas, and silver sleep,
And waves that sway themselves in rest,
And dead calm in that noble breast
Which heaves but with the heaving deep.

The soul of the poet seems to mount and fly till
it reaches the ship and lingers to ask, Is this the
end of all my care? He asks Time to teach him
the real truth, that he does not suffer in a dream;
he can not realize his loss and feels that should he
meet the vessel and find his friend alive he would
not be surprised.

XV.

To-night the winds begin to rise
And roar from yonder dropping day;
The last red leaf is whirled away,
The rooks are blown about the skies;

The forest cracked, the waters curled,
The cattle huddled on the lea;
And wildly dashed on tower and tree
The sunbeam strikes along the world:

And but for fancies, which aver
That all thy motions gently pass

In Memoriam

Athwart a plane of molten glass,
I scarce could brook the strain and stir

That makes the barren branches loud;
And but for fear it is not so,
The wild unrest that lives in woe
Would dote and pore on yonder cloud

That rises upward always higher,
And onward drags a laboring breast,
And topples round the dreary west,
A looming bastion fringed with fire.

Hallam's body reaches home and

'T is well; 't is something; we may stand
Where he in English earth is laid,
And from his ashes may be made
The violet of his native land."

The Danube has given the body to the Severn,
near which Clevedon church is located and there
as twice a day the salt tide ebbs and flows, so his
grief is hushed or vocal.

XX.

The lesser griefs that may be said,
That breathe a thousand tender vows,
Are but as servants in a house
Where lies the master newly dead;

In Memoriam

Who speak their feeling as it is,
And weep the fullness from the mind:
“It will be hard,” they say, “to find
Another service such as this.”

My lighter moods are like to these,
That out of words a comfort win;
But there are other griefs within,
And tears that at their fountain freeze.

For by the hearth the children sit
Cold in the atmosphere of Death,
And scarce endure to draw the breath,
Or like to noiseless phantoms flit:

But open converse is there none,
So much the vital spirits sink
To see the vacant chair, and think,
“How good! how kind! and he is gone.”

In the last poem of this section the poet imagines the criticisms the people will make on his overpowering grief and answers that he sings because he must and as the linnets do, one gay because her young have flown, the other sad because her young are stolen.

Numbers XXII to XXVIII inclusive are an expression of friendship for the dead, the reality and blessedness of which will endure in spite of time and change.

In Memoriam

XXVI.

Still onward winds the dreary way;
I with it; for I long to prove
No lapse of moons can canker Love,
Whatever fickle tongues may say.

And if that eye which watches guilt
And goodness, and hath power to see
Within the green the mouldered tree,
And towers fall'n as soon as built —

Oh, if indeed that eye foresee
Or see (in Him is no before)
In more of life true life no more,
And love the indifference to be,

Then might I find, ere yet the morn
Breaks hither over Indian seas,
That Shadow waiting with the keys,
To shroud me from my proper scorn.

XXVII.

I envy not in any moods
The captive void of noble rage,
The linnet born within the cage,
That never knew the summer woods:

I envy not the beast that takes
His license in the field of time,

In Memoriam

Unfettered by the sense of crime,
To whom a conscience never wakes;

Nor, what may count itself as blest,
The heart that never plighted troth,
But stagnates in the weeds of sloth;
Nor any want-begotten rest.

I hold it true, whate'er befall;
I feel it, when I sorrow most;
'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.

Beginning with section XXVIII and terminating with XXXVII are poems which turn from the past to the future, which treat of the immortality of the soul and find hope confirmed by revelation. It is Christmas time and three poems are given to that season, its happy associations and the deep sense of personal affliction that tempers its joy; but joy it is, for the dead do not change to us nor lose their mortal sympathy. Then the resurrection of Lazarus gives no reply to the question, "Where wert thou, brother, those four days?"

XXXII.

Her eyes are homes of silent prayer,
Nor other thought her mind admits
But, he was dead, and there he sits,
And he that brought him back is there.

In Memoriam

Then one deep love doth supersede
All other, when her ardent gaze
Roves from the living brother's face,
And rests upon the life indeed.

All subtle thought, all curious fears,
Borne down by gladness so complete,
She bows, she bathes the Savior's feet
With costly spikenard and with tears.

Thrice blest whose lives are faithful prayers,
Whose loves in higher love endure;
What souls possess themselves so pure,
Or is there blessedness like theirs?

XXXIV.

My own dim life should teach me this,
That life shall live for evermore,
Else earth is darkness at the core,
And dust and ashes all that is;

This round of green, this orb of flame,
Fantastic beauty; such as lurks
In some wild poet, when he works
Without a conscience or an aim.

What then were God to such as I?
'Twere hardly worth my while to choose

In Memoriam

Of things all mortal, or to use
A little patience ere I die;

'Twere best at once to sink to peace,
Like birds the charming serpent draws,
To drop head-foremost in the jaws
Of vacant darkness and to cease.

If a voice from the grave should say there is no life in the future yet would he keep love alive. But there must be an immortality, or love would be but a coarse appetite such as prompts the satyr to drunkenness. Though in manhood we see truths but darkly yet we bless the name of God who made them current coin: "Truth embodied in a tale shall enter lowly doors." When Urania, the heavenly Muse, reproves him for trespassing on holy ground, his own Muse excuses him for trying to soothe his aching heart in this tribute to human love.

A fifth division is recognized in poems XXXVIII — XLVIII. When a soul desires to fully realize immortal life the human heart is not satisfied with the mere conviction that immortality is a fact. The desire is strong to hold communion with the departed. Sadness returns to the poet with the spring time but he feels that if the dead retain any consciousness of this life his lines will be not all ungrateful to his friend. Again the yew tree is introduced, this time to signify that

In Memoriam

though his thoughts may brighten momentarily they are soon again tinged with gloom. When the bride leaves home she leaves grief behind her, goes to rear her family, to teach them, and to link the generations each to each; but she will return bringing her babe and the family will count new things dear as old; not so Hallam, who, though he fill "such great offices as suit the full-grown energies of heaven," will not return. Tennyson realizes that even here on earth, Hallam's genius was rising higher and higher and wishes that he might rush at once to his friend who, he fears, will advance beyond him in the other life so that Tennyson will no longer be his equal. He reproaches himself for this thought as Hallam was his superior even here and closes this lyric with the beautiful stanza :

"And what delights can equal those
That stir the spirit's inner deeps,
When one that loves but knows not,
reaps
A truth from one that loves and knows?"

XLIII.

If Sleep and Death be truly one,
And every spirit's folded bloom
Thro' all its intervital gloom
In some long trance should slumber on;

In Memoriam

Unconscious of the sliding hour,
Bare of the body, might it last,
And silent traces of the past
Be all the color of the flower:

So then were nothing lost to man;
So that still garden of the souls
In many a figured leaf enrolls
The total world since life began;

And love will last as pure and whole
As when he loved me here in time,
And at the spiritual prime
Rewaken with the dawning soul.

How fares it with the dead? Does he "forget the days before God shut the doorways of his head"? Perhaps some mystic hint of this earth may reach him there and if so the poet hopes he will turn about and listen to the message that tells about the friends he left here. The babe is at first unconscious of himself and in the same way after our second birth we must establish our identity by means, possibly, of the blood and breath of this life.

XLVI.

We ranging down this lower track,
The path we came by, thorn and flower,

In Memoriam

Is shadowed by the growing hour,
Lest life should fail in looking back.

So be it: there no shade can last
In that deep dawn behind the tomb,
But clear from marge to marge shall bloom
The eternal landscape of the past;

A lifelong tract of time revealed;
The fruitful hours of still increase;
Days ordered in a wealthy peace,
And those five years its richest field.

O Love, thy province were not large,
A bounded field, nor stretching far;
Look also, Love, a brooding star,
A rosy warmth from marge to marge.

He alludes to the doctrine that our soul may merge at death into the one general soul and that there may be no individual existence hereafter, but this he thinks "is faith as vague as all unsweet." He expects to meet Hallam again.

XLVIII.

If these brief lays, of Sorrow born,
Were taken to be such as closed
Grave doubts and answers here proposed,
Then these were such as men might scorn:

In Memoriam

Her care is not to part and prove;
 She takes, when harsher moods remit,
 What slender shade of doubt may flit,
And makes it vassal unto love:

And hence, indeed, she sports with words,
 But better serves a wholesome law,
 And holds it sin and shame to draw
The deepest measure from the chords:

Nor dare she trust a larger lay,
 But rather loosens from the lip
 Short swallow-flights of song, that dip
Their wings in tears, and skim away.

The sixth division begins with XLIX and contains more mysterious problems. Evil and death are considered, and the possible conflict of nature with faith.

L.

Be near me when my light is low,
 When the blood creeps, and the nerves prick
 And tingle; and the heart is sick,
And all the wheels of Being slow.

Be near me when the sensuous frame
 Is racked with pangs that conquer trust;
 And Time, a maniac scattering dust,
And Life, a Fury slinging flame.

In Memoriam

Be near me when my faith is dry,
And men the flies of latter spring,
That lay their eggs, and sting and sing,
And weave their petty cells and die.

Be near me when I fade away,
To point the term of human strife,
And on the low dark verge of life
The twilight of eternal day.

LI.

Do we indeed desire the dead
Should still be near us at our side?
Is there no baseness we would hide?
No inner vileness that we dread?

Shall he for whose applause I strove,
I had such reverence for his blame,
See with clear eye some hidden shame
And I be lessened in his love?

I wrong the grave with fears untrue:
Shall love be blamed for want of faith?
There must be wisdom with great Death:
The dead shall look me thro' and thro'.

Be near us when we climb or fall:
Ye watch, like God, the rolling hours

In Memoriam

With larger other eyes than ours,
To make allowance for us all.

LII.

I can not love thee as I ought,
For love reflects the things beloved;
My words are only words, and moved
Upon the topmost froth of thought.

“Yet blame not thou thy plaintive song,”
The spirit of true love replied;
“Thou canst not move me from thy side,
Nor human frailty do me wrong.

“What keeps a spirit wholly true
To that ideal which he bears?
What record? not the sinless years
That breathed beneath the Syrian blue:

“So fret not, like an idle girl,
That life is dashed with flecks of sin.
Abide: thy wealth is gathered in,
When Time hath sundered shell from pearl.”

He has seen many a sober and sensible man
whose youth was wild and reckless; if we thought
this sowing of wild oats necessary to the develop-
ment of the man would we preach the doctrine to
the young? No.

In Memoriam

“Hold thou the good: define it well:
For fear divine Philosophy
Should push beyond her mark, and be
Procuress to the lords of Hell.”

LIV.

Oh, yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;
That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life shall be destroyed,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete;
That not a worm is cloven in vain;
That not a moth with vain desire
Is shrivelled in a fruitless fire,
Or but subserves another's gain.
Behold, we know not anything;
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last — far off — at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.
So runs my dream: but what am I?
An infant crying in the night:
An infant crying for the light:
And with no language but a cry.

In Memoriam

LV.

The wish, that of the living whole
No life may fail beyond the grave,
Derives it not from what we have
The likest God within the soul ?

Are God and Nature then at strife,
That Nature lends such evil dreams?
So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life;

That I, considering everywhere
Her secret meaning in her deeds,
And finding that of fifty seeds
She often brings but one to bear,

I falter where I firmly trod,
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope thro' darkness up to God,

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope.

LVI.

“So careful of the type ?” but no.
From scarped cliff and quarried stone

In Memoriam

She cries: "A thousand types are gone:
I care for nothing, all shall go.

"Thou makest thine appeal to me:
I bring to life, I bring to death:
The spirit does but mean the breath:
I know no more." And he, shall he,

Man, her last work, who seemed so fair,
Such splendid purpose in his eyes,
Who rolled the psalm to wintry skies,
Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer,

Who trusted God was love indeed
And love, Creation's final law —
Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shrieked against his creed —

Who loved, who suffered countless ills,
Who battled for the True, the Just,
Be blown about the desert dust,
Or sealed within the iron hills?

No more? A monster then, a dream,
A discord. Dragons of the prime,
That tear each other in their slime,
Were mellow music matched with him.

O life as futile, then, as frail!
O for thy voice to soothe and bless!

In Memoriam

What hope of answer or redress?
Behind the veil, behind the veil.

LVII.

Peace; come away: the song of woe
Is after all an earthly song:
Peace; come away: we do him wrong
To sing so wildly: let us go.

Come let us go: your cheeks are pale;
But half my life I leave behind:
Methinks my friend is richly shrined;
But I shall pass, my work will fail.

Yet in these ears, till hearing dies,
One set slow bell will seem to toll
The passing of the sweetest soul
That ever look'd with human eyes.

I hear it now, and o'er and o'er,
Eternal greetings to the dead,
And "Ave, Ave, Ave," said,
"Adieu, adieu," for evermore.

The division closes with LVIII in which Urania advises him not to waste fruitless tears on his friend's death but to wait a little longer and then he will see more clearly.

In Memoriam

The next three general divisions teach hope for the best and the acceptance of sorrow as a chastener. . Sad, awful visions come to him in the night and he sees his friend's burial place, learns what the future might have had in store for him and dwells upon the vanity of fame and monuments. Another Christmas comes but not with the same feelings and once more faith in the future and in advancement after death takes hold upon him. The poems of this division, closing with LXXXIII, are some of the finest of the series.

LXV.

Sweet soul, do with me as thou wilt;
I lull a fancy trouble-tossed
With "Love's too precious to be lost,
A little grain shall not be spilt."

And in that solace can I sing,
Till out of painful phases wrought
There flutters up a happy thought,
Self-balanced on a lightsome wing:

Since we deserved the name of friends,
And thine effect so lives in me,
A part of mine may live in thee
And move thee on to noble ends.

In Memoriam

LXVII.

When on my bed the moonlight falls,
I know that in thy place of rest,
By that broad water of the west,
There comes a glory on the walls:

Thy marble bright in dark appears,
As slowly steals a silver flame
Along the letters of thy name,
And o'er the number of thy years.

The mystic glory swims away;
From off my bed the moonlight dies;
And closing eaves of wearied eyes
I sleep till dusk is dipped in gray:

And then I know the mist is drawn
A lucid veil from coast to coast,
And in the dark church like a ghost
Thy tablet glimmers to the dawn.

LXXIII.

So many worlds, so much to do,
So little done, such things to be,
How know I what had need of thee,
For thou wert strong as thou wert true?

In Memoriam

The fame is quenched that I foresaw,
The head hath missed an earthly wreath;
I curse not nature, no, nor death;
For nothing is that errs from law.

We pass: the path that each man trod
Is dim, or will be dim, with weeds:
What fame is left for human deeds
In endless age? It rests with God.

O hollow wraith of dying fame,
Fade wholly, while the soul exults,
And self-infolds the large results
Of force that would have forged a name.

The poems LXXXIV to LXXXIX make the tenth section in which "The low beginnings of content" result in (1) acceptance of loss, (2) new attachments, (3) power to dwell with pleasure in the past.

LXXXIV.

When I contemplate all alone
The life that had been thine below,
And fix my thoughts on all the glow
To which thy crescent would have grown;

I see thee sitting crowned with good,
A central warmth diffusing bliss

In Memoriam

In glance and smile, and clasp and kiss,
On all the branches of thy blood;

Thy blood, my friend, and partly mine;
For now the day was drawing on,
When thou should'st link thy life with one
Of mine own house, and boys of thine

Had babbled "Uncle" on my knee;
But that remorseless iron hour
Made cypress of her orange flower,
Despair of Hope, and earth of thee.

I seem to meet their least desire,
To clap their cheeks, to call them mine.
I see their unborn faces shine
Beside the never-lighted fire.

I see myself an honored guest,
Thy partner in the flowery walk
Of letters, genial table-talk,
Or deep dispute, and graceful jest;

While now thy prosperous labor fills
The lips of men with honest praise,
And sun by sun the happy days
Descend below the golden hills.

With promise of a morn as fair;
And all the train of bounteous hours

In Memoriam

Conduct by paths of growing powers
To reverence and the silver hair;

Till slowly worn her earthly robe,
Her lavish mission richly wrought,
Leaving great legacies of thought,
Thy spirit should fail from off the globe;

What time mine own might also flee,
As linked with thine in love and fate,
And, hovering o'er the dolorous strait
To the other shore, involved in thee,

Arrive at last the blessed goal,
And He that died in Holy Land
Would reach us out the shining hand,
And take us as a single soul.

What reed was that on which I leant?
Ah, backward fancy, wherefore wake
The old bitterness again, and break
The low beginnings of content.

LXXXVI.

Sweet after showers, ambrosial air,
That rollest from the gorgeous gloom
Of evening over brake and bloom
And meadow, slowly breathing bare

In Memoriam

The round of space, and rapt below
Thro' all the dewy-tasselled wood,
And shadowing down the horned flood
In ripples, fan my brows and blow

The fever from my cheek, and sigh
The full new life that feeds thy breath
Throughout my frame, till Doubt and
Death,
Ill brethren, let the fancy fly

From belt to belt of crimson seas
On leagues of odor streaming far,
To where in yonder orient star
A hundred spirits whisper "Peace."

LXXXVIII.

Wild bird, whose warble, liquid sweet,
Rings Eden thro' the budded quicks,
Oh, tell me where the senses mix,
Oh, tell me where the passions meet,

Whence radiate: fierce extremes employ
Thy spirits in the darkening leaf,
And in the midmost heart of grief
Thy passion clasps a secret joy:

And I — my harp would prelude woe —
I can not all command the strings;

In Memoriam

The glory of the sum of things
Will flash along the chords and go.

The next part terminates with XCVI. Indignant at the idea that any person would not welcome the dead if they could return to us, he yet recognizes the difficulties that might arise. Still he is anxious to see Hallam.

XCI.

When rosy plumelets tuft the larch,
And rarely pipes the mounted thrush;
Or underneath the barren bush
Flits by the sea-blue bird of March;

Come, wear the form by which I know
Thy spirit in time among thy peers,
The hope of unaccomplish'd years
Be large and lucid round thy brow.

When summer's hourly-mellowing change
May breathe, with many roses sweet,
Upon the thousand waves of wheat,
That ripple round the lonely grange;

Come: not in watches of the night,
But when the sunbeam broodeth warm,
Come, beauteous in thine after form,
And like a finer light in light.

In Memoriam

If a vision should reveal Hallam, Tennyson could not believe in his friend's actual presence if the vision promised what afterward came true. He does not know that a spirit ever does return to earth so as to be recognized but dares ask that Hallam's spirit shall hear "the wish too strong for words to name" and meet and commune with his own spirit, though the poet's eye is unable to see the form of his friend.

XCIV.

How pure at heart and sound in head,
With what divine affections bold
Should be the man whose thought would hold
An hour's communion with the dead.

In vain shalt thou, or any, call
The spirits from their golden day,
Except, like them, thou too canst say,
My spirit is at peace with all.

They haunt the silence of the breast,
Imaginations calm and fair,
The memory like a cloudless air,
The conscience as a sea at rest:

But when the heart is full of din,
And doubt beside the portal waits,
They can but listen at the gates,
And hear the household jar within.

In Memoriam

Now follows a family scene, in which after a gathering upon the lawn where all the family lingered, Tennyson retired to the house and spent the night with Hallam's last-written letters through which the dead man touched him from the past.

XCVI.

You say, but with no touch of scorn,
Sweet-hearted, you, whose light blue eyes
Are tender over drowning flies,
You tell me, doubt is devil-born.

I know not: one indeed I knew
In many a subtle question versed,
Who touched a jarring lyre at first,
But ever strove to make it true:

Perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds,
At last he beat his music out.
There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

He fought his doubts and gathered strength,
He would not make his judgment blind,
He faced the spectres of the mind
And laid them: thus he came at length

To find a stronger faith his own;
And power was with him in the night,

In Memoriam

Which makes the darkness and the light,
And dwells not in the light alone,

But in the darkness and the cloud,
As over Sinai's peaks of old,
While Israel made their gods of gold,
Altho' the trumpet blew so loud.

The twelfth and thirteenth sections carry the elegy on to the end of CXV. They show the dim foreshadowing of a perfect content that is to come. Though the old sore opens easily the poet sees the wisdom of his affliction and will embrace his present life of sorrow and disappointment, learning wisdom therefrom. CIII contains a beautiful dream significant of the belief that whatever is beautiful here on earth we may take with us beyond.

CVI.

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night:
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.



In Memoriam

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

In Memoriam

CVIII.

I will not shut me from my kind,
And, lest I stiffen into stone,
I will not eat my heart alone,
Nor feed with sighs a passing wind :

What profit lies in barren faith,
And vacant yearning, tho' with might
To scale the heaven's highest height,
Or dive below the wells of Death ?

What find I in the highest place,
But mine own phantom chanting hymns ?
And on the depths of death there swims
The reflex of a human face.

I'll rather take what fruit may be
Of sorrow under human skies :
'Tis held that sorrow makes us wise,
Whatever wisdom sleep with thee.

With the coming of spring, hope reawakens and
this soon ripens into faith and confidence. Such
is the idea of the ten poems that compose the
fifteenth division.

CXXII.

Oh, wast thou with me, dearest, then,
While I rose up against my doom,

In Memoriam

And yearned to burst the folded gloom,
To bare the eternal Heavens again,

To feel once more, in placid awe,
The strong imagination roll
A sphere of stars about my soul,
In all her motion one with law;

If thou wert with me, and the grave
Divide us not, be with me now,
And enter in at breast and brow,
Till all my blood, a fuller wave,

Be quickened with a livelier breath,
And like an inconsiderate boy,
As in the former flash of joy,
I slip the thoughts of life and death;

And all the breeze of Fancy blows,
And every dew-drop paints a bow,
The wizard lightnings deeply glow,
And every thought breaks out a rose.

The last section beginning with CXXV is a triumphant burst of song. Faith, Hope, and Love are conquerors and the greatest of these is Love. Without it Hope could not be born and Faith is weak.

In Memoriam

CXXV.

Whatever I have said or sung,
Some bitter notes my harp would give,
Yea, tho' there often seem'd to live
A contradiction on the tongue,

Yet Hope had never lost her youth;
She did but look through dimmer eyes;
Or Love but played with gracious lies,
Because he felt so fixed in truth :

And if the song were full of care,
He breathed the spirit of the song;
And if the words were sweet and strong,
He set his royal signet there;

Abiding with me till I sail
To seek thee on the mystic deeps,
And this electric force, that keeps
A thousand pulses dancing, fail.

CXXVI.

Love is and was my lord and king,
And in his presence I attend
To hear the tidings of my friend,
Which every hour his couriers bring.

Love is and was my king and lord,
And will be, tho' as yet I keep

In Memoriam

Within his court on earth, and sleep
Encompassed by his faithful guard,

And hear at times a sentinel
Who moves about from place to place,
And whispers to the worlds of space,
In the deep night, that all is well.

CXXVII.

And all is well, tho' faith and form
Be sundered in the night of fear;
Well roars the storm to those that hear
A deeper voice across the storm,

Proclaiming social truth shall spread,
And justice, ev'n tho' thrice again
The red fool-fury of the Seine
Should pile her barricades with dead.

But ill for him that wears a crown,
And him, the lazar, in his rags:
They tremble, the sustaining crags;
The spires of ice are toppled down,

And molten up, and roar in flood;
The fortress crashes from on high,
The brute earth lightens to the sky,
And the great Æon sinks in blood,

In Memoriam

And compass'd by the fires of Hell;
While thou, dear spirit, happy star,
O'erlook'st the tumult front afar,
And smilest, knowing all is well.

CXXIX.

Dear friend, far off, my lost desire,
So far, so near in woe and weal;
Oh loved the most, when most I feel
There is a lower and a higher;

Known and unknown; human, divine;
Sweet human hand and lips and eye;
Dear heavenly friend that canst not die,
Mine, mine, for ever, ever mine;

Strange friend, past, present, and to be;
Loved deeplier, darklier understood;
Behold, I dream a dream of good,
And mingle all the world with thee.

The last poem is the marriage lay for his sister, whom Hallam had known in her childhood. It is cheerful and even gay and leaves behind it a happy sense of the confident soul that is Tennyson's after his long struggle with doubt and the great problems of life which were thrust upon him by the unfortunate death of his friend.

In Memoriam

CXXXI.

O living will that shalt endure
When all that seems shall suffer shock,
Rise in the spiritual rock,
Flow thro' our deeds and make them pure,

That we may lift from out of dust
A voice as unto him that hears,
A cry above the conquered years
To one that with us works, and trust,

With faith that comes of self-control,
The truths that never can be proved
Until we close with all we loved,
And all we flow from, soul in soul.

O true and tried, so well and long,
Demand not thou a marriage lay;
In that it is thy marriage day
Is music more than any song.

Nor have I felt so much of bliss
Since first he told me that he loved
A daughter of our house; nor proved
Since that dark day a day like this;

In Memoriam

Tho' I since then have numbered o'er
Some thrice three years: they went and
came,
Remade the blood and changed the frame,
And yet is love not less, but more;

No longer caring to embalm
In dying songs a dead regret,
But like a statue solid-set,
And moulded in colossal calm.

Regret is dead, but love is more
Than in the summers that are flown,
For I myself with these have grown
To something greater than before;

Which makes appear the songs I made
As echoes out of weaker times,
As half but idle brawling rhymes,
The sport of random sun and shade.

But where is she, the bridal flower,
That must be made a wife ere noon?
She enters, glowing like the moon
Of Eden on its bridal bower:

On me she bends her blissful eyes
And then on thee; they meet thy look

In Memoriam

And brighten like the star that shook
Betwixt the palms of paradise.

Oh, when her life was yet in bud,
He too foretold the perfect rose.
For thee she grew, for thee she grows
For ever, and as fair as good.

And thou art worthy; full of power;
As gentle, liberal-minded, great,
Consistent; wearing all that weight
Of learning lightly like a flower.

But now set out: the noon is near,
And I must give away the bride;
She fears not, or with thee beside
And me behind her, will not fear:

For I that danced her on my knee,
That watched her on her nurse's arm,
That shielded all her life from harm,
At last must part with her to thee;

Now waiting to be made a wife,
Her feet, my darling, on the dead;
Their pensive tablets round her head
And the most living words of life

In Memoriam

Breathed in her ear. The ring is on,
The “wilt thou?” answer’d, and again
The “wilt thou?” asked till out of twain
Her sweet “I will” has made you one.

Now sign your names, which shall be read,
Mute symbols of a joyful morn,
By village eyes as yet unborn;
The names are signed, and overhead

Begins the clash and clang that tells
The joy to every wandering breeze;
The blind wall rocks, and on the trees
The dead leaf trembles to the bells.

Oh, happy hour, and happier hours
Await them. Many a merry face
Salutes them — maidens of the place,
That pelt us in the porch with flowers.

Oh, happy hour, behold the bride
With him to whom her hand I gave.
They leave the porch, they pass the grave
That has to-day its sunny side.

To-day the grave is bright for me,
For them the light of life increased,
Who stay to share the morning feast,
Who rest to-night beside the sea.

In Memoriam

Let all my genial spirits advance
To meet and greet a whiter sun;
My drooping memory will not shun
The foaming grape of eastern France.

It circles round, and fancy plays,
And hearts are warmed, and faces bloom,
As drinking health to bride and groom
We wish them store of happy days.

Nor count me all to blame if I
Conjecture of a stiller guest,
Perchance, perchance, among the rest,
And, tho' in silence, wishing joy.

But they must go, the time draws on,
And those white-favored horses wait;
They rise, but linger; it is late;
Farewell, we kiss, and they are gone.

A shade falls on us like the dark
From little cloudlets on the grass,
But sweeps away as out we pass
To range the woods, to roam the park,

Discussing how their courtship grew,
And talk of others that are wed,
And how she look'd, and what he said,
And back we come at fall of dew.

In Memoriam

Again the feast, the speech, the glee,
The shade of passing thought, the wealth
Of words and wit, the double health,
The crowning cup, the three-times-three,

And last the dance; — till I retire:
Dumb is that tower which spake so loud,
And high in heaven the streaming cloud,
And on the downs a rising fire.

And rise, O moon, from yonder down,
Till over down and over dale
All night the shining vapor sail
And pass the silent-lighted town,

The white-faced halls, the glancing rills,
And catch at every mountain head,
And o'er the friths that branch and spread
Their sleeping silver thro' the hills;

And touch with shade the bridal doors,
With tender gloom the roof, the wall;
And breaking let the splendor fall
To spangle all the happy shores

By which they rest, and ocean sounds,
And, star and system rolling past,
A soul shall draw from out the vast
And strike his being into bounds,

In Memoriam

And moved thro' life of lower phase,
Result in man, be born and think,
And act and love, a closer link
Betwixt us and the crowning race

Of those that, eye to eye, shall look
On knowledge; under whose command
Is Earth and Earth's, and in their hand
Is Nature like an open book;

No longer half-akin to brute,
For all we thought and loved and did,
And hoped, and suffered, is but seed
Of what in them is flower and fruit;

Whereof the man, that with me trod
This planet, was a noble type
Appearing ere the times were ripe,
That friend of mine who lives in God,

That God, which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.



The Classic Elegy

Bion, a great poet who lived about two hundred and sixty years before Christ, wrote a beautiful lament for Adonis who, according to the legend, was killed while hunting the wild boar. According to the Greek legend, Adonis was the most beautiful of mortals and was ardently loved by Venus, to whom he was allowed by Jupiter to devote one third of his time, while another third he must give to the queen of shadows, Persephone. Of the remainder, he himself was master and this he preferred to spend with Venus. People see the origin of this myth to be in the seasons; of which winter lasts four months, the time Adonis, light or the sun, was with Persephone. Venus, finding her lover dead in the forest, laments his loss. Bion's elegy is a direct address to Venus, in which he alludes to the circumstances of the death of Adonis and represents the Loves as joining in her grief. Mrs. Browning has made a metrical version of the poem, from which this is a selection that gives some idea of the style:

I mourn for Adonis — the Loves are lamenting.

He lies on the hills in his beauty and death;
The white tusk of a wild boar has transpierced
his white thigh.

The Classic Elegy

Cytherea grows mad at his thin, gasping
breath,
While the black blood drips down on the pale
ivory,
And his eyeballs lie quenched with the
weight of his brows;
The rose fades from his lips, and upon them
just parted
The kiss dies, the goddess consents not to
lose,
Though the kiss of the dead can not make
her light-hearted;
He knows not who kisses him dead in the
dews.

On the death of Bion, Moschus, his pupil, of whom little is known, wrote a beautiful lament for his master. In this he calls on nature to mourn for Bion, calls on the woodland glades, the rivers and groves; on the roses to redden in their sorrow; on the windflower to turn red in its grief. He begs the Muses to join in the wail and calls up the pathetic scenes of Grecian mythology to emphasize his grief. Bion is likened to a shepherd in true pastoral fashion, and the loss of his song is lamented by Apollo, the satyrs and the famed musicians of classic times. Had Moschus the power, he would go to the lower world and, like Orpheus of old, charm Pluto into releasing

The Classic Elegy

the dead Bion that he might once more return to his grieving friends.

These quotations are taken from a prose version by Andrew Lang.

“Begin, ye Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

No more to his herds he sings, that beloved herdsman, no more 'neath the lonely oaks he sits and sings, nay, but by Pluteus's side he chants a refrain of oblivion. The mountains too are voiceless: and the heifers that wander with the herds lament and refuse their pasture.”

“Begin, ye Sicilian Muses, begin the dirge.

Nor so much, by the gray sea-waves, did ever the sea-bird sing, nor so much in the dells of dawn did the birds of Memnon bewail the son of the Morning, fluttering around his tomb, as they lamented for Bion dead.

Nightingales, and all the swallows that once he was wont to delight, that he would teach to speak, they sat over against each other on the boughs and kept moaning, and the birds sang in answer, ‘Wail, ye wretched ones, even ye!’”

The Classic Elegy

The poems just cited, with others of similar form, became the model for many English elegies. The pastoral which Virgil makes most familiar to the modern college student, seemed peculiarly fitted to the expression of grief, and the simple loves of shepherds tending their flocks, the songs they sang to the accompaniment of their oaten pipes, their sorrows and their joys become figuratively the symbols of more modern feeling.

When Sir Philip Sidney was killed near Zutphen, the mourning in England was more profound and general than had ever been known. The Court and the people vied in doing honor to his knightly spirit and in manifesting their grief in outward show. Many poets contributed their share to the general lamentation and Edmund Spenser about 1587 wrote a purely pastoral elegy which he called *Astrophel*, a fanciful name meaning star-lover, assumed by Sidney in some of his own poems. *Astrophel* is a gentle shepherd born in Arcady:

“For from the time that first the Nymph,
 his mother,
Him forth did bring, and taught her lambs
 to feed;
A slender swaine, excelling far each other,
In comely shape, like her that did him
 breed,

The Classic Elegy

He grew up fast in goodnesse and in grace,
And doubly faire woxe both in mynd and
face.”

* * * * *

“For he could pipe, and daunce, and caroll
sweet,

Emongst the shepheards in their shearing
feast;

As somers larke that with her song doth greet
The dawning day forth comming from the
East.

And layes of love he also could compose:
Thrise happie she, whom he to praise did
chose.”

* * * * *

“And many a Nymph both of the wood and
brooke,

Soone as his oaten pipe began to shrill,
Both christall wells and shadie groves forsooke
To heare the charmes of his enchanting
skill ;

And brought him presents, flowers if it were
prime,

Or mellow fruit if it were harvest time.”

But Stella (the Countess of Essex to whom
the poem is dedicated) is the one to whom Sid-
ney devoted himself and of whom alone he

The Classic Elegy

sang. To her he vowed service of bold deeds
and he was well able to achieve success for he
was

“In wrestling nimble, and in running swift,
In shooting steddie, and in swimming strong;
Well made to strike, to throw, to leape, to lift,
And all the sports the shepherds are emong.
In every one he vanquisht every one,
He vanquisht all, and vanquisht was of none.”

He was exceedingly fond of hunting and having
great skill and wishing to raise his own fame he
“sought where salvage beasts do most abound.”
It happened that when he was abroad he came
into a great forest where he tried “the bruitish
nation (Spain) to enwrap.”

“So as he rag’d emongst the beastly rout,
A cruell beast of most accursed brood
Upon him turnd, (despeyre makes cowards
stout,)
And, with fell tooth accustomed to blood,
Launched his thigh with so mischievous might,
That it both bone and muscles ryved quight.”

The poet wonders where the other shepherds
and the *faire mayds* were that they did not stop
the flow of the awful wound. But shepherds
wandering that way found him and bore him

The Classic Elegy

“unto his loved lassie” who “when she saw her
Love in such a plight” grieved frantically until

“At last when paine her vital pours had
spent,

His wasted life her weary lodge forwent.”

Stella could not remain behind and in death at
once joined her lover.

“The gods, which all things see, this same
beheld,

And, pittying this paire of lovers trew,
Transformed them there lying on the field

Into one flowre that is both red and blew;
It first grows red, and then to blew doth fade,
Like Astrophel, which thereinto was made.

And in the midst thereof a star appeares,

As fairly formd as any star in skyes:
Resembling Stella in her freshest yeares,

Forth darting beames of beautie from her
eyes:

And all the day it standeth full of deow,
Which is the teares, that from her eyes did flow.

That hearbe of some, Starlight is cald by name,

Of others Penthia, though not so well:

But thou, where ever thou doest finde the same,
From this day forth do call it Astrophel:

The Classic Elegy

And, when so ever thou it up doest take,
Do pluck it softly for that shepherd's sake.

Tears are said to beget the windflower, or anemone. The poets make frequent use of the many fanciful legends of the origin of flowers.

This long introduction to the classical elegy has been given in order to prepare for the two which are to be the special subject for study. What seems so forced and strained to our modern taste, becomes natural and beautiful when known in the light of the classic models. To prosaic minds the imagery, the assumption of pastoral qualities, and the wealth of classic allusion are apt to seem useless and burdensome unless they acquaint themselves with the contents of the storehouses from which the poets drew their own inspiration. If one can not know the classics thoroughly he can at least acquire some of their spirit at second hand from the English transformation. So the two remaining elegies should be studied with particular care, and to assist in that they have been somewhat more fully annotated.



Lycidas

Edward King was a fellow-student of Milton at Cambridge. He was a promising young man who had shown some talent in versification. In crossing to Ireland in August, 1637, he was shipwrecked and drowned. At the time of his death he was a tutor and fellow in the college. It is not known that Milton was particularly intimate with King, but when a small volume of memorial verse was published at Cambridge in the same year, Milton's poem *Lycidas* was incorporated with the others. In it he bewails the loss of his friend, but he introduces other reflections that give historic value to the piece. That the poem expresses a real personal grief is questionable; it seems a trifle artificial and to voice merely a general regret at the catastrophe, yet the poem has many ardent admirers. Mark Pattison says "This piece, unmatched in the whole range of English poetry and never again to be equaled by Milton himself leaves criticism behind. Indeed, so high is the poetic note here reached that the common ear fails to catch it." Another has written in equally strong terms: "To say that *Lycidas* is beautiful is to say that a star or a rose is beautiful. Conceive the finest and purest graces of the Pagan mythology, culled and mingled with modest yet daring hand among the

Lycidas

roses of Sharon and the lilies of the valley — conceive the waters of Castalia sprinkled on the flowers which grow in the garden of God — and you have a faint conception of what *Lycidas* means to do.” — *Gilfillan*.

The poem must be remembered as the last one written in what is known as the first period of Milton's work, that period in which he was a cavalier, adherent to the King, and before he became the stern councilor and bitter advocate of Puritanism. In *Lycidas*, are heard notes of the approaching change: “All I desire to point out here is that in *Lycidas* Milton's original picturesque vein is for the first time crossed with one of quite another sort, stern, determined, obscurely indicative of suppressed passion, and the resolution to do or die. The fanaticism of the covenanter and the sad grace of Petrarch seem to meet in Milton's monody. Yet these opposites instead of neutralizing each other are blended into one harmonious whole by the presiding but invisible genius of the poet. The conflict between the old cavalier world — the years of gayety and festivity of a splendid and pleasure-loving court — and the new Puritan world, into which love and pleasure are not to enter — this conflict which was entering into the social life of England, is also begun in Milton's own breast and is reflected in *Lycidas*. . . . In the earlier poems Milton's muse has sung in the tones of the age that is passing away;

Lycidas

except in his austere chastity, a cavalier. Though even in *L'Allegro* Dr. Johnson truly detects 'some melancholy in his mirth' in *Lycidas*, for a moment, the tones of both ages — the past and the present — are combined and then Milton leaves behind him forever the golden age and one half his poetic genius." — *Mark Pattison*.

The versification and the rhymes are notably varied and give a unique charm to the production. The student should trace out these variations and note the effect they produce. Masson says: "Then the interlinking and intertwining of the rhymes, sometimes in pairs, sometimes in threes, or even in fives, and at all varieties of intervals, from that of the contiguous couplet to that of an unobserved chime or stanza of some length, are positive perfection. Occasionally, too, there is a line that does not rhyme; and in every such case, though the rhyme is not missed by the reader's ear, in so much music is the line embedded, yet a delicate artistic reason may be detected or fancied for its formal absence."

Lycidas¹

Yet once more,² O ye Laurels,³ and once
more,

Ye Myrtles brown, with Ivy never sere,
I come to pluck your berries harsh and
crude,⁴

And with forc'd fingers rude

Shatter your leaves before the mellowing
year.

Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear⁵
Compels⁶ me to disturb your season due;
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,⁷
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.
Who would not sing for Lycidas? he knew

1. A name originally meaning purity. It is borne by a shepherd in one of Bion's idyls and in an eclogue by Virgil.

2. Milton had decided to await the maturity of his powers before writing more, but the death of his friend urges him to take up the pen.

3. The laurel was the meed for poetic victory; the myrtle symbolized peace and was held by each singer in turn at a Greek banquet; the ivy, significant of friendship, was twined about the brow of the poet. Milton, seizing these, would sing once more.

4. His own poetic powers are not of the highest, in his own estimation.

5. The death of his friend is dear to him, that is, touches him closely.

6. Singular form of the verb, to show close union of subjects.

7. King was twenty-five years old.

Lycidas

Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.⁸
He must not float upon his watery bier
Unwept, and welter⁹ to the parching wind
Without the meed of some melodious tear.¹⁰

Begin then, Sisters of the Sacred Well,¹¹
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth
spring,

Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.
Hence¹² with denial vain and coy excuse;
So may some gentle Muse¹³
With lucky words favor my destin'd urn,¹⁴

And, as he passes, turn
And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud;¹⁵
For we were nurs'd upon the self-same hill,¹⁶
Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and
rill;

Together both, ere the high lawns appear'd
Under the opening eyelids of the Morn,

8. King had written a few verses.

9. To be tossed about by the wind.

10. Mournful songs have been called the tears of the Muses.

11. The Nine Muses had their birth near the Pierian spring in a grove near the foot of Mount Olympus. There were other wells sacred to the Muses. "Begin then," is in imitation of the classic laments.

12. Away with.

13. Poet, inspired by Muse.

14. My grave.

15. Black coffin. Milton hopes some poet may favor him with an elegy.

16. Attended the same college, Christ's College, Cambridge. None of this is to be considered literally.

Lycidas

We drove afield, and both together heard
What time the gray-fly¹⁷ winds her sultry
 horn,
Batt'ning¹⁸ our flocks with the fresh dews of
 night,
Oft till the star that rose at ev'ning bright¹⁹
Towards Heav'ns descent had slop'd his wes-
 tering²⁰ wheel,
Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,
Temper'd to th' oaten flute,²¹
Rough Satyrs²² danc'd and Fauns²³ with
 clov'n heel
From the glad sound would not be absent,
 long,
And old Damœtas²⁴ lov'd to hear our song.

But O the heavy change, now thou art
 gone,
Now thou art gone, and never must return!

17. The trumpet-fly hums loudly during midday.

18. Feeding.

19. Possibly Hesperus, the evening star.

20. Westward-going.

21. In pastoral poetry the shepherds always pipe on an oaten flute.

22. Greek deities of woods and fields whose hoofs and horns and short, bristling hair did not improve their appearance. Pan was the chief of these and he it was who invented the shepherd's pipe and played upon it in masterly manner.

23. Male divinities of Latin mythology like the satyrs. It has been thought that the allusion is to the Cambridge students.

24. A common name in pastoral poetry. The allusion is probably to a tutor in Christ's College.

Lycidas

Thee, Shepherd, thee the woods, and desert
caves
With wild thyme and the gadding²⁵ vine o'er-
grown
And all their echoes mourn.
The willows and the hazel copses green
Shall now no more be seen
Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.
As killing as the canker²⁶ to the rose,
Or taint-worm²⁷ to the weanling herds that
graze,
Or irost to flowers, that their gay wardrobe
wear
When first the white thorn²⁸ blows:
Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherds' ear.²⁹
Where were ye, Nymphs,³⁰ when the re-
morseless deep
Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd Lycidas?
For neither were ye playing on the steep³¹

25. Straggling.

26. A worm that destroys the leaves and blossoms.

27. A parasite especially destructive to sheep, or a small red spider erroneously believed by the country folk to be a deadly poison to horses and cattle.

28. Hawthorne, a shrub allied to our thornapple.

29. This stanza is the most personal expression of loss in the entire poem.

30. The female companions of Pan and his partners in the dance. The allusion to them as in conformity to the classic models Milton is following.

31. Probably the high hills in Denbighshire which are known as burial places of the Druids.

Lycidas

Where your old bards, the famous Druids,³²
lie,
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona³³ high,
Nor yet where Deva³⁴ spreads her wizard
stream.

Ay me! I fondly dream!
Had ye been there — for what could that have
done?
What could the Muse herself that Orpheus
bore,³⁵
The Muse herself, for her enchanting son,
Whom universal Nature did lament,
When by the rout that made the hideous
roar
His gory visage down the stream was sent,
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian
shore?³⁶

Alas! what boots it with uncessant care
To tend the homely slighted shepherds' trade,

32. Priests of an early English faith, the ruins of whose rustic temples still exist.

33. The isle of Anglesea was a fastness of the Druids.

34. The river Dee. On its banks is Chester the place from which King sailed. Many legends connected with it give it the right to the title "wizard stream."

35. This was Calliope the mother of Orpheus.

36. In their orgies the Thracian women tore Orpheus in pieces. His head was thrown into the Hebrus River, down which it floated singing and was finally cast ashore on the island of Lesbos.

Lycidas

And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?³⁷
Were it not better done, as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neæra's³⁸ hair?
Fame is the spur that the clear³⁹ spirit doth
raise
(That last infirmity of noble mind)
To scorn delights, and live laborious days;
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind fury⁴⁰ with the abhorred
shears,
And slits the thin-spun life. "But not the
praise,⁴¹"
Phœbus⁴² repli'd, and touch'd my trembling
ears;⁴³

37. Of what use is it to ply the poet's art? The great English poets have passed away and Milton with his high ideals is discouraged.

38. Were it not better to spend one's life in pleasure and idleness than to try to accomplish fame in poetry? Amaryllis and Neæra are names in the Greek idyls.

39. Noble.

40. The three Fates presided over human destiny. One spun the thread of life in which the dark and the light were mingled; another twisted the thread and made it now strong, now weak; the third, Atropos, armed with shears cut the thread and closed the life. The Furies were avenging deities whom Milton seems to have confused with the Fates.

41. But Fate can not destroy the praise that is due a man.

42. Apollo, most glorious of the gods, who presided over music, poetry and the fine arts.

43. To touch the ears was to prompt the memory. The allusion is to classic lines, for Virgil says: "When I thought to sing of kings and battles, Apollo touched my ear."

Lycidas

“Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistening foil ⁴⁴
Set off to th’ world, nor in broad Rumor lies,
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove; ⁴⁵
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in Heav’n expect thy meed.”

O fountain Arethuse, ⁴⁶ and thou honor’d
flood,
Smooth-sliding Mincius, ⁴⁷ crown’d with vocal
reeds,
That strain I heard was of a higher mood;
But now my oat proceeds, ⁴⁸
And listens to the herald of the sea ⁴⁹
That came in Neptune’s plea. ⁵⁰
He ask’d the waves, and ask’d the felon winds
What hard mishap hath doom’d this gentle
swain?

And question’d every gust of rugged wings
That blows from off each beaked promontory;

44. Nor in the tinsel by which the world sets off her jewels.

45. The chief divinity of the Latins.

46. The poet returns to his pastoral model. Arethuse, a fountain near Syracuse, sacred to the pastoral muse, is here personified.

47. A river tributary to the Po, honored in being the birthplace of Virgil.

48. I resume my song.

49. Triton, the son of Neptune, half man and half fish.

50. Neptune, the god of the sea. Triton came in defense of Neptune who was not responsible for the death of King and catechised his witnesses.

Lycidas

They knew not of his story,
And sage Hippotades⁵¹ their answer brings:
That not a blast was from his dungeon stray'd,
The air was calm, and on the level brine
Sleek Panope with all her sisters⁵² play'd.
It was that fatal and perfidious bark
Built in th' eclipse,⁵³ and rigg'd with curses
 dark,
That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.⁵⁴
 Next Camus,⁵⁵ reverend sire, went footing
 slow,⁵⁶
His mantle hairy and his bonnet sedge⁵⁷
Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge
Like to that sanguine flower inscrib'd with
 woe.⁵⁸
“Ah! who hath reft” (quoth he) “my dearest
 pledge?”
Last came, and last did go,

51. Æolus, the god of the winds.

52. The Nereids, nymphs of the sea.

53. Proverbially an unlucky time.

54. Triton concludes that the ship sank in calm waters through no fault of the gods.

55. Personification of the river Cam on which the college was located; hence the University.

56. The Cam is a very slow river.

57. Masson says: “The mantle is as if made of ‘river sponge,’ which floats copiously in the Cam; the bonnet of the ‘river sedge,’ distinguished by vague marks traced somehow over the middle of the leaves, and serrated at the edge of the leaves.”

58. The hyacinth. Hyacinth was slain and from his blood sprang the flower.

Lycidas

The pilot of the Galilean lake;⁵⁹
Two massy keys he bore of metals twain
(The golden opes, the iron shuts amain);
He shook his miter'd locks,⁶⁰ and stern be-
spoke:
“How well could I have spar'd for thee, young
Swain,
Enow⁶¹ of such as for their bellies' sake
Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold?⁶²
Of other care they little reck'ning make
Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,
And shove away the worthy bidden guest;
Blind mouths!⁶³ that scarce themselves know
how to hold
A sheep-hook,⁶⁴ or have learn'd aught else the
least
That to the faithful herdsman's art belongs!

59. St. Peter. He is represented in art as carrying two keys and the crossed keys are still the Pope's insignia. King was educated for the church, hence the grief of St. Peter.

60. St. Peter was the first bishop of the church and so wore the miter. Here follows another digression in which Milton rails against the Established Church as it then was governed. This is his first expression of sympathy with the Puritan Church.

61. Enough.

62. Those ministers who enter the church for the living to be obtained. Notice biblical allusion in “climb into the fold.” John 10:1.

63. These men are mouths and nothing else.

64. They are ignorant men scarce knowing how to hold a shepherd's crook. The metaphor is a little mixed.

Lycidas

What reck's it them? ⁶⁵ What need they?
they are sped; ⁶⁶
And when they list ⁶⁷ their lean and flashy
songs
Grate on their scrannel ⁶⁸ pipes of wretched
straw;
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,
But swoln with wind, and the rank mist they
draw,
Rot inwardly, ⁶⁹ and foul contagion spread;
Besides what the grim wolf ⁷⁰ with privy ⁷¹ paw
Daily devours apace, and nothing said;
But that two-handed engine ⁷² at the door
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more."

* * * * *

Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more;
Henceforth thou art the genius of the shore, ⁷³
In thy large recompense, and shalt be good
To all that wander in that perilous flood.

65. What do they care?

66. They are provided for.

67. Wish.

68. Screechy. Thin. Milton's own word.

69. Their souls decay.

70. Possibly the Catholic Church to whom many were returning at that time.

71. Secret.

72. This is not clear. Milton may have meant the sword of justice, but the general idea of the two lines is that retribution is at hand for this corruption of the church. The prophecy proved a true one.

73. The presiding deity of the shore, caring for all that navigate the ocean.

Lycidas

Thus sang the uncouth swain⁷⁴ to th' oaks
and rills,
While the still morn went out with sandals
gray;
He touch'd the tender stops⁷⁵ of various
quills,⁷⁶
With eager thought warbling his Doric lay;⁷⁷
And now the sun had stretch'd out all the
hills,⁷⁸
And now was dropt into the western bay;
At last he rose, and twitch'd his mantle blue;⁷⁹
To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new.⁸⁰

74. Rude or uncultivated or, as some commentators think, unknown.

75. Of his instrument.

76. Used in playing the lyre.

77. Many pastorals were written in the Doric dialect.

78. The evening sun had lengthened the shadows.

79. Drew about him his blue mantle such as shepherds wear.

80. The last eight lines form an epilogue and of course the allusion is to Milton himself.

Biographical Sketches

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

ALFRED TENNYSON

JOHN MILTON



James Russell Lowell

1819-1891

Lowell was one of the few authors to achieve first rank in several departments. His poetry is most exquisite in sentiment, often keen and witty, and always abounding in beautiful expressions; as a critic he was at times caustic and severe, but he showed so clear a grasp of his subject and spoke in such a fearless way with evidence of such profound scholarship that his writings exerted great influence. He was a diplomat who could win such credit at the court of Spain that he was transferred to England, and as Minister to the Court of St. James he handled our foreign relations with such consummate skill and was so popular with the British in a social way that his departure for America caused universal regret.

He was the son of a clergyman and was educated at Harvard, practiced law in Boston, and had his life-long home in the house his father had owned, Elmwood, in Cambridge. Keenly intellectual by nature he drew his associates from the most cultivated people and became a man of scholarly tastes and refined manners. The home in which he lived was situated in the midst of groves several acres in extent where the great variety of trees, the luxuriant shrubbery and

James Russell Lowell

flowering plants, gave refuge to many varieties of birds and other forms of animal life. For these he had the warmest love, and birds and flowers appear again and again in all his writings. No one has seemed to have a keener insight into nature or more skill in putting into attractive form the results of his observations. He sees everything with a poet's eye and the simplest facts are clothed in choicest phrase.

Sorrow came to him early in his married life and his feelings are poured forth in those beautiful lyrics *She Came and Went*, *The First Snow Fall* and the *Changeling*. Then his wife died and again his grief resulted in the production of two poems of matchless beauty, *After the Burial* and *The Dead House*. The same night that Lowell's wife died a child was born to Longfellow, who touchingly alluded to the striking contrast in *The Two Angels*.

Lowell and Longfellow, Emerson and Holmes, all sons of clergymen, with Whittier, Bryant, and Taylor, have by their spotless characters, high motives and the purity of their writings given a tone to American literature of this century that has been surpassed by no other epoch here or abroad. Home and country, ties of kindred and of friendship, nature and her inspiration, God and his love have been their themes, and the race is the nobler for their having lived. The brilliancy of their work has been in no way dimmed by

James Russell Lowell

their adherence to right and their blameless lives. They have demonstrated that the wretched lives of other men of genius have been a blemish upon the pages of history and that the success of the others has been in spite of their errors and not because of them.

Lowell's writings are peculiarly keen and witty, and one of the unique productions of the age is his *Biglow Papers* in which through the medium of the Yankee dialect, in poetry and prose, he speaks his mind on the slavery question and the two wars in which it embroiled us. Cutting sarcasm and keen ridicule characterize many of the papers while often there is an outburst of sentiment as touching as it is unexpected. These stanzas in which he laments the death of his nephews, lost in the Rebellion, are fine examples:

“Rat-tat-tat-tattle thru the street
I hear the drummers makin’ riot,
An’ I set thinkin’ o’ the feet
Thet follored once an’ now are quiet,—
White feet ez snowdrops innercent,
That never knowed the paths o’ Satan,
Whose comin’ step ther’ ’s ears thet won’t,
No, not lifelong, leave off awaitin’.

Why, hain’t I held ’em on my knee?
Didn’t I love to see ’em growin’,

James Russell Lowell

Three likely lads ez wal could be,
Hahnsome an' brave an' not tu knowin'?
I set an' look into the blaze
Whose natur', jes' like theirn, keeps
climbin',
Ez long, 'z it lives, in shinin' ways,
An' half despise myself for rhymin'.

Wut's words to them whose faith an' truth
On War's red techstone rang true metal,
Who ventured life an' love an' youth
For the gret prize o' death in battle?
To him who, deadly hurt, agen
Flashed on afore the charge's thunder,
Tippin' with fire the bolt of men
Thet rived the Rebel line asunder?

'Tain't right to hev the young go fust,
All throbbin' full o' gifts an' graces,
Leavin' life's paupers dry ez dust
To try an' mak b'lieve fill their places:
Nothin' but tells us wut we miss,
Ther' 's gaps our lives can't never fay in,
An' *thet* world seems so fur from this
Lef' for us loafers to grow gray in!"

The Vision of Sir Launfal is a story of the times
of King Arthur, but it is an example of the litera-
ture that lives, always appropriate, confined to no

James Russell Lowell

time or place. Incorporated in it are a summer and a winter scene as beautiful as any the language affords. His prose writings are voluminous and varied, and their wit and beauty are charming to everyone who has the scholarship to appreciate their wealth of classical allusion and the breadth and depth of their thought.

He is buried with his family in the beautiful Mt. Auburn cemetery not far from the grave of Longfellow.

“He was essentially a fighter; he could always begin the attack, and always in criticism as in talk, sound the charge and open the fire. The old Puritan conscience was deep in him, with its strong simple vision, even in æsthetic things, of evil and of good, of wrong and of right, and his magnificent wit was all at its special service. He armed it, for vindication and persuasion, with all the amenities, the ‘humanities’—with weapons as sharp as it has ever carried.”

Alfred Tennyson

1809-1892

The life of Tennyson is the quiet uneventful life of the poet. Warm-hearted, shy and sensitive from boyhood and absorbed in his studies, he was not apt to meet with stirring adventures nor to seek excitement in travel. Life in his father's home was pleasant and helpful, for the family was large and his two older brothers were both inclined to poetry. The rectory was situated in a delightful region and Alfred's senses were early attuned to the beautiful in nature.

His education progressed at the hands of his father, the rector, and in the village school, and at eighteen he and his brother published a small volume of poems. At Trinity College, Cambridge, he won in his second year a gold medal for his poem *Timbuctoo*, and surrounded himself with a group of brilliant friends whose talents made them conspicuous in university life.

Here chief among his friends was the lovable genius, Arthur Henry Hallam, son of the historian. Everyone bears tribute to the perfect character and wonderful genius of this young man, to whom Tennyson was so ardently attached. In 1833, just after Hallam had graduated from Cambridge, he died while abroad with his father, and

Alfred Tennyson

the mourning among his friends was deep and sincere. This was the one startling and revolutionary event in the life of Tennyson. Prior to that time he had written many poems of decided promise and a few of distinguished merit in spite of the contemptuous criticisms of the magazines. But the death of his friend cast a pall over his spirit, so dense that the naturally sad and melancholy traits of his character threatened to predominate. For ten years he brooded over his loss and gave no book to the public. But his genius was only in temporary eclipse and when he again was ready to take up his pen he was in the full maturity of his powers. The first book published after his affliction was printed in 1842 and fully established his reputation. His work at once took first rank and from that time forward his success was continuous, though as late as 1845 he had received little pecuniary compensation and was glad to accept a pension from the crown.

About this time, Carlyle writing to Emerson said—"A true human soul, or some authentic approximation thereto, to whom your own soul can say, Brother.—A man solitary and sad, as certain men are, dwelling in an element of gloom. One of the finest looking men in the world. A great shock of rough, dusty dark hair; bright, laughing, hazel eyes; massive aquiline face, most massive, yet most delicate; of sallow brown complexion, almost Indian-looking; clothes cynically

Alfred Tennyson

loose, free and easy; smokes infinite tobacco. His voice is musical metallic, — fit for loud laughter and piercing wail, and all that may lie between; speech and speculation free and plenteous: I do not meet in these last decades such company over a pipe. We shall see what he will grow to.”

This year 1850 was a notable one in Tennyson's life. Wordsworth died and Tennyson was chosen poet laureate to succeed him. He married a woman who became a devoted wife and made for him a happy home; and he published his matchless elegy *In Memoriam*. Though elsewhere the poem is treated at greater length, here are the comments of Gladstone and of Stedman. The former says: “The richest oblation ever offered by the affection of friendship at the tomb of the departed,” and the latter, “the great threnody of our language, by virtue of its unique conception and power.”

Idyls of the King were published in 1859 and *Enoch Arden* in 1864. He published three dramas which though very strong and beautiful poems were not popular when presented on the stage.

In 1884 he was raised to the peerage by the Queen. He lived at his beautiful home at Farringford in the Isle of Wight, or at Aldworth, another house he owned in Sussex, where he died in October, 1892. He was interred in Westminster Abbey.

“Next to Robert Browning, and in front of the

Alfred Tennyson

Chaucer monument, my father was laid: and for weeks after the funeral multitudes passed by the grave in never-ending procession."

"The death of Tennyson was worthy of his life, and yet with a conscious stateliness which was all his own; and these two, simplicity and stateliness, were also vital in the texture of his poetry." — *Stopford Brooke*.

"He was in the main orthodox. He had sympathy with doubt for he had felt it himself, and he had given honorable expression to his belief in the value, as faith, of 'honest doubt.' But he had never felt it in that imperious form in which it demands a solution satisfactory to the reason. After some degree of hesitation and difficulty he was able to put it aside. The something amiss 'will be unriddled by and by.'" — *Hugh Walker*.

His writings are voluminous and worthy of study in their entirety. So much is said of him and his work in other parts of the course that it is unnecessary to dwell longer on him here.

John Milton

1608-1674

“John Milton, the poet, the statesman, the philosopher, the glory of English literature, the champion and the martyr of English liberty.”

— *T. B. Macaulay.*

In personal appearance Milton was attractive, being of medium size and well proportioned, with features perfectly regular and symmetrical and surmounted in early life by light brown hair. He was refined and delicate in manner, but withal skillful and courageous when the demand was made upon him; though he was known by his college mates as the “Lady of Christ’s College” this did not imply any undue effeminacy.

Born the son of a notary in comfortable circumstances, Milton was carefully educated and showed early in life a studious and responsive disposition. Long before the age at which life begins to mean much to the ordinary boy, John Milton had consecrated himself to a work which though delayed in its accomplishment until he was an old man was none the less successfully finished. At college he manifested some of the traits of character that made him subsequently change opinions and even religion, and at least twice he was under

John Milton

sentence of suspension by the college faculties for his obstinate adherence to his own opinions.

It was a stormy age into which he was thrown and one in which took place the greatest political changes known in the history of England. He saw Charles I on the throne, knew the condition of the court and the church in that degenerate time; he was a sympathetic worker in the Revolution and during Cromwell's Protectorate; and he lived for fourteen years a quiet spectator of the intrigues and follies of the dissolute court of Charles II. A royalist in the beginning, he wrote with a prejudice in favor of the king and his adherents, and it was not until he became satisfied of the clergy's degeneracy and of the hopelessness of reform within the church that he took up the cause of the Puritans. He traveled abroad, became interested in education and for nearly nine years was a teacher himself, writing his famous *Tractate* during this epoch.

Under Cromwell, Milton was made Latin Secretary to the Council of State and though incapacitated by blindness during the last eight years, he held the position till the Restoration, after which though it is alleged that he was tempted by the new régime to become its advocate, he steadily refused and lived in retirement devoted to his literary labors.

Mark Pattison writes: "Milton's life is a drama in three acts. The first discovers him in the calm

John Milton

and peaceful retirement of Horton, of which *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso* and *Lycidas* are the expression. In the second act he is breathing the foul and heated atmosphere of party passion and religious hate, generating the lurid fires which glare in the battailous canticles of his prose pamphlets. The three great poems *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* are the utterances of his final period of solitary and Promethean grandeur, when blind, destitute, friendless, he testified of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, alone before a fallen world."

He was three times married, first to a Royalist who after living with him a month, left him suddenly and returned to the gayer life of her home. This was in 1643 and Milton was much embittered by the act, writing diatribes on divorce and marriage; but subsequently he received her again to his house. When she died nine years later she left him three daughters who were much assistance to him when he became helpless. His second wife lived for a short time only but his third wife survived him.

His blindness was brought on by excessive labor for his political party though he asserts himself that he had weakened them in youth by his extravagant habits of night study. The affliction came upon him when he was forty-four so that for twenty-two years he was dependent upon rela-

John Milton

tives, friends, and paid assistants for all that he read or wrote. And it was not always pleasant and cheerful aid that was given him. Dismayed by the rigor of the work and weary of continuously reading to their father in a language of which they could comprehend nothing, his daughters rebelled, prompted perhaps by the irritability with which the poor old man is charged. He had lost most of his fortune, and of personal friends he had few for he was so reticent and repelling in his manner that none were attracted to him. It is in this epoch that he makes this pathetic accusation of his opponents and defense of himself: "They charge me with poverty, because I have never desired to become rich dishonestly; they accuse me of blindness, because I have lost my eyes in the service of liberty; they tax me with cowardice, and while I had the use of my eyes and my sword I never feared the boldest among them; finally, I am upbraided with deformity, while none was more handsome in the age of beauty. I do not even complain of my want of sight; in the night with which I am surrounded the light of the Divine Presence shines with a more brilliant luster."

Ralph Waldo Emerson bears this testimony to the influence exerted by Milton and his writings: "Leaving out of view the pretensions of our contemporaries (always an incalculable influence), we think no man can be named whose mind still acts

John Milton

on the cultivated intellect of England and America with an energy comparable to that of Milton. Shakespeare is a voice merely; who he was that sang, that sings, we know not. Milton stands erect, commanding, still visible as a man among men, and reads the laws of the moral sentiment to the newborn race."

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